

TOOTING TREMBLE AS BATES LEADS A REVIVAL

By ARGUS

Tooting and Mitcham 3, Wycombe Wanderers 2

HAVING been beaten four times in their first six Isthmian League outings Wycombe Wanderers players and officials could afford to smile through adversity as they left Tooting on Saturday — and justifiably so. Trailing 3-0 in the second half — a crazy indication of the run of play — Wycombe had the Tooting terrors trembling in the last quarter-of-an-hour with two regal goals from Paul Bates.

If the third Tooting goal had been disallowed—Wycombe defenders were convinced the ball was two feet over the goal-line before it reached scorer Dave Roberts — the Wanderers would have gained a point their heroism fully merited.

There were no defeatist complexes, no bad-time-blues about this much-maligned Wycombe team. Visiting Tooting, very much the under-dogs, the Wanderers went down gloriously in an exciting game which proved there is life in the Isthmian League yet.

They did so despite a thigh injury which kept Cliff Trott hobbling at half speed for 80 minutes.

Even their own supporters gave the Wanderers no chance of winning before the game started. Optimists thought Tooting would win by five goals, pessimists gave them a ten goals margin.

THE ADVANTAGE

The very opposite was the case. Talented Tooting, the Isthmian champions, had the advantage in only one facet of the game—luck. Matching Tooting's over individualism with a concerted team effort, the Wanderers kept the exchanges even.

Goalkeeper Brown had another excellent game. He was helped by a transformed defence which had completely forgotten its Oxford City qualms. John Fisher played valiantly in the centre against slippery young Clay and volatile Paddy Hasty had a quiet afternoon's stroll thanks to Dave Thomas.

FLABBERGASTED

Tooting began the second half with a rush and Flanagan dived horizontal to head a fine goal from Clay's centre, in the 55th minute. Sixteen minutes later, after Wycombe pressure, Flanagan's centre seemed to dip over the dead line before reaching the Wycombe goalmouth.

Roberts casually flicked the ball into the net as Brown and his co-defenders prepared for a goal-kick. They were flabbergasted when referee Mr. D. D. Maitland pointed to the centre spot. Despite appeals, the goal stood.

This catastrophe set Wycombe on fire. Bates dribbled past pivot Bennett to score a characteristic goal in the 75th minute and—after Pearson had received a tremendous ovation for making a "miracle" save from Bartholomew — Bates added Wycombe's second, with a minute to go, when he headed in Tomlin's centre.

GOAL MASTER

There was far more decision and snap about the Wycombe half backs and greater liaison with their forwards. With Trott limping behind his usual front line position, the Wanderers' attack's suspect firing power was drained even further. Bates put in some heart-pounding runs but it was only in the final stages that he came into his own as a goal master rather than a goal inspirer.

Significantly, Bates looked more dangerous in the period when John Bartholomew — scorer of 180 goals for Hayes — was sent into the attack with Trott dropping back to left back.

During this determined Wycombe onslaught on a tiring Tooting defence, the visiting forwards struck their best yet form.

Forgetting their elegance in desperate attempts to prevent Wycombe goals, Tooting were fortunate to be a goal up at the interval—a gem by Clay in the 43rd minute which gave Brown no chance.

Many Tooting raids had been repulsed by the quick tackling and clearing of the Wycombe defenders. The home defence wore the harassed look—particularly when Bates and Trott sent Rockell tearing through, for goalkeeper Wally Pearson to save at the inside-right's feet. But Pearson was lucky to get in the way of two fiercely angled shots from Rockell a little later.